MAGAZINE SECTION

THE WASHINGTON HERALD

MAGAZINE SECTION

WASHINGTON, D. C., SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1913.

The Little Booster Stories

By Wallace Irwin

Illustrated By James Montgomery Flagg

The BOOSTER'S HONEYMOON

"MAPLE-HONEY-KID!" Brian Boru Blaney leaned from Pullman seat 5 and thus addressed himself to the somber orbs of light becomingly set in the features of the very new Mrs. Blaney, that lady being comfortably cushioned in Pullman seat 6.

"Sugar-boy-dear!" responded the previously matter-of-fact Betsy. Then, with a momentary lapse into sanity, she whispered: "Brian, the whole car's looking at us!"

Responsive to the warning, Brian made a sudden movement, and several handfuls of rice clattered to the floor from various parts of his clothing.

"Darn that god-speed stuff!" he grumbled. "The more I see of rice the the worse I hate Japs."

He removed his hat and shook therefrom a miniature hailstorm. The entire car tittered—there was an excursion of rather young Boston schoolma'ams returning from San Bruno. Brian blushed to the roots of his auburn hair, then his cheeks wrinkled to a broad grin. His was one of those natures to whom publicity in any form can never be quite distasteful.

"Enjoy yourselves, girls!" he smiled bowing to his appreciative audience. On the lapel of his coat hung a bright blue button nearly as large as a saucer and labeled: "BOOST FOR SAN BRUNO." This token, as well as an enormous harp-shaped floral emblem which reposed between their chairs, bearing the word "BOOST" in white carnations, was the gift of the San Bruno Boosters' Club which organization has accompanied them to the station with enthusiasm, a brass band, and the city's surplus of overshoes.

Brian's salute to the assembled schoolma'ams was well received by all save Betsy, who sat for several minutes with her eyes averted toward the whirling landscape.

"Sugar," she said at last, "I wish you'd take that thing"—pointing to the Booster Button—"and put it in your pocket. And I wish you'd give that"—indicating the floral emblem—"to the porter. It reminds me of an Elks' funeral."

"Now, Candy-bag!" protested Brian, in a hurt tone, "we ain't ashamed of the home town, are we?"

"You bet we aren't!" agreed Betsy warmly. "And that's why I think it's up to us not to make the home town ridiculous."

"Porter!" said Brian, with one hand beckoning the menial and the other pointing out the floral emblem. "Bear away the tribute!"

He slipped the booster button quietly into his pocket.

"You old dandy thing!" Thus she rewarded him. He sat awhile in unnatural silence.

"Funny!" he said, at last. "Those are the very words Obrey O'Malley said to me this morning."

"What words?"

"'Don't make the home town ridiculous.' Y' know, when the Boosters took us to the train, C. W. Ketchum pullin' my arm loose at the socket while kittenish Sid Eidlitz poured eighteen cents' worth o' rice down my collar? Well, old Obrey O'Malley led me aside for a minute. Uncle Obe's got more sense in his upper right-hand eye-lash than Ketchum can hire in his whole office force. 'Brian,' says Obrey, 'you're going to see N'York for the first time. It's a great big town full o' things a young man can slip up on and fall over. I hope you won't think me impertinent, but I want to give you a word of advice—don't be a hick.'"

"What's a hick?" asked Betsy.

"A hick's a dressed-up Rube out hunting for a shell game," he defined it. "'I've lived in N' York for forty years,' O'Malley went on, 'and I know it from Wall Street to Waldorf. Take it from me it's up to the stranger coming fresh from the clover to sing low, because every inhabitant of Manhattan Island has got the art of financial transgression down to a poisoned pellet. The graft industry is overcrowded there, and N' York would naturally starve if it wasn't for the man from home who comes piking down Broadway with his check-book in his hand and a sprig of timothy over his ear. Lifelong practice at the art of bunk has made the N' Yorkers so darned canny, they can steal your clothes, ship you home in a borrowed nightie, and make you think you've had a good time. So take an old man's tip. When you come in sight of the Statue of Liberty, step light, sing low, and, for Gawsh sake, don't let 'em know you're a hick!'"

"Maybe we'd better go to Niagara Falls, after all!" Betsy faltered.

"I says to O'Malley," Brian went on, "'Uncle Obe, what can I do to conceal my hickory origin?'

"'I'll give you a few Don'ts for Hicks,' says O'Malley. 'Don't smoke a cigar with a band on it. Don't get up in street cars and offer a lady your seat. Don't let the barber shave the back of your neck. Don't talk politics with strangers. Don't wear tan shoes with buttons on 'em.'" (Furtively Betsy noted that her husband's shoes were of the kind described.) "'Don't drink Manhattan cocktails. Don't be ashamed to walk over people's knees in the theater. Don't stand on windy corners to watch the chorl go by. And don't offend the head waiter by trying to tip him in public. Those are a few rough rules which may keep you a while out of the Order of Straw along the Great White Graft, says Uncle Obe.'"

"That was thoughtful of him," Betsy intimated.

"Y-yes," agreed Brian grudgingly. "But it makes me kind o' sore. What brand o' lobsters do those N' York dudes eat that makes 'em so all-fired brighter 'n the rest o' the country? Can't an Indian from another reservation blow in with his war-paint and not—"

"They're naturally lots more experienced than we are, living as they do in the midst of things," she suggested.

"Um. O'Malley gave me this letter of introduction." Brian fished a large envelope from his inner pocket. "Said it was to a real N' Yorker—a fella belonging to a Knickerbocker family so old it considers the Vanderbilts vulgar tradespeople; said that if I ever got skinned in any sort of a bilk I could go round to this keen young guy and he'd pull me out. Nice of him, wasn't it?"

"It certainly was," agreed Betsy. She opened the flap of the envelope and read:

Dear Dyckman:

This is to introduce Mr. Brian Boru Blaney, who has come, for the first time, to see the town. You'll be doing a favor to your father's old chum if you take my young friend under your wing now and then and steer him clear of any of your city's justly celebrated pitfalls. With regards to your dad,

Sincerely,

OBREY O'MALLEY.

"Now you must present this letter as soon as we get to New York," said Betsy, in a slightly abashed tone.

Brian turned the envelope critically in his hand, reading the address at every conceivable angle.

"Mr. Dyckman Wynkoop, 13 1-2 Washington Square," he read aloud; then added: "That ain't a name; it's a label on an imported cheese."

Just the same, Brian was impressed, and was discovered gazing disgustedly at his buttoned tan shoes at intervals during the trip.

They were amid the horrific grandeurs of the Royal Gorge, battling ground of Titans (according to prospectus), when an impertinent intrusion appeared in the person of G. Hunter McCosh, flight-seeing passengers were assembled in the observation car, huddled around each window, to let no marvel pass. Roaring through chasms measureless to man, brow-beaten by infernal crags, the soft cool smoke of the D. & R. G. locomotive added that Stygian touch so well portrayed by the late Mr. Dante. Some passengers were regarding the Devil's Needle and saying "Ah!" Yet others were looking at the far-piled Ogre's Dungeon, and remarking "Oh!" But Brian and Betsy were looking into each other's eyes, and the latter was exclaiming: "You dear old red-headed proposition——"

"Just look at that!" said a resonant voice at their shoulders. "Just look at that!"

A large, florid elderly gentleman with eyeglasses and a tooth-brush mustache spread over the bridal couple a prominent plaid suit in a pattern reminiscent of the costume worn by George IV while shooting grouse on the Highland estate of the Janckintosh of Mackintosh. He fairly crowded in between them and pointed out of the window. "Behold yon masterpiece of nature's antic art, appalling cataclysm of a planet's dawn ne'er limned by any human paint-brush, sir! There they stand, sir! Rocks! Craggy rocks! Fit for some race of demi-gods——"

"Jaggy rocks fit for some race of demijohns—I gucha," said Brian appreciatively.

"You may sing, young man," continued the eloquent stranger, "of the terrors of the boundless deep or the wonders of the tropic night—but look at those rocks. By ginger, ain't they great?"

"In the real-estate business?" inquired Brian affably.

"Well, no—not exactly."

"I thought by the way you went at us," continued the Little Booster, "that you were trying to sell us the Rocky Mountains on the easy-payment plan."

"Ah, youth!" rhapsodized the big one. "Youth will have its quip at the wisdom of age. Youth and love, I see you're a bridal couple. I hope, madam," turning a ravishing smile upon Betsy, "that you can spare your husband a moment." Turning to Brian with a suspiciously glib motion of the thumb and forefinger. "Play cards, sir?"

"Not with you," announced Brian, looking the other coolly between the eyes.

"I trust I'm not making a nuisance of myself——"

"Not yet," replied Brian, turning for the first time in the direction of the scenery.

"My name is McCosh—G. Hunter McCosh," said the florid person, still smiling. "Any time you want to look me up, I'm in Car 3." He strode jauntily away.

"Oh, Sugar Boy, how rude of you!" Betsy chided, as soon as the other man had gone.

"Take it from me, Betsy," said Brian, in rather a depressed tone, "that old guy's phoney. I don't know what he's got to sell, but I bet he makes it in a dark room. I wonder why he picked me out?" He looked reflectively at his toes, and remembered the warning words of O'Malley. "Gawsh! I wonder if he saw my buttoned tans!"

The further they rushed Eastward, the more earnestly Brian hated his shoes as a recognized badge of Hickdom. He did not look up Mr. McCosh in Car 3, but that thoughtful gentleman made occasion to sit down next to Brian in the buffet when the latter was enjoying a solitary cigarette. They were approaching Chicago at the time, and McCosh sat paring his broad finger-nails with a pearl-handled knife.

"Try one of my perfectos," he said suddenly, offering an ostentatious roll of tinfoil.

"Thanks; I never smoke," responded Brian, taking a fresh cigarette from his box.

"Say, you're a cagey kid, all right," laughed the big one, changing from the grandiloquent to the vernacular. His eyes slanted and his weather-beaten mouth came down at one corner. "What's your line?"

"I'm a fly-catcher."

"Haw-haw. You're a smart kid, anyhow. Now, look here. As an enterprisin' young business man from the West, launchin' out on life's voyage with a fair young helpmeet, and await-in' alert and joyous to hear the welcome knock of Opportunity at your door—Opportunity, the goddess who knocks but once—you are unspoiled, you are ambitious, too smart to let the golden moment pass unheeded. Ever thought of investin' in mining stocks?"

"Show me," said Brian in a level tone.

"As you see by my card"—he extended a square of pasteboard—"I am general director of the Goodfellow and Surprise Gold Lode Company, Incorporated."

"Phew! Is it as bad as that?"

"Have your joke!" growled Mr. McCosh. "But the old must be patient with the young. I want to talk to you like an uncle. I want to put you on the ground floor in this unparalleled proposition, a chance we only offer our particular friends. I like your face."

Mr. McCosh's fat fingers deftly unfolded a bale of handsomely printed papers engraved in rich orange, the seal of Nevada at the head, an intricate, wavy border down the margins. He laid a compelling palm on Brian's knee.

"In six months from now they'll pay you 25 cents on the dollar—25 per cent!"

"Honest," said Brian, carefully folding the stocks and handing them back, "you're the coarsest Wallingford make-up I've struck yet."

"How's that?" spluttered the big one.

"Excuse me, while I take a good look at you. I thought they had all the old-style con men stuffed and under glass by this time. And to think of one of you whiskered dodos tryin' to panhandle me—me—with a line o' minin' stock fluff that was passed up by Adam and Eve. Say, old man, I'm sorry for you. You make me want to cry. Your childish stab at dishonesty is sadder 'n 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' and twice as stale. Say, what jay town are you going to work with that line o' county-fair bilk?"

"New York," said Mr. McCosh, with simple dignity.

"What!" The word came like a pistol-shot. "With what? Why, Uncle Rufus, you've got no more show in New York with that prehistoric swindle than a glass bead on Fifth Avenue. Honest, they teach better grafts than that in the New York public schools. Why don't you stick to St. Jo, uncle, where the grass is long and the grazing good?"

The face of the honest Mr. McCosh suddenly settled into tragic lines.

"If I'd 'a' known you was one of us," he began sadly. He made the sign of Three Walnuts between his thumb and fingers. "If I'd known you was in our line o' goods, I'd never come that con on you. But, since you mention St. Jo, I'll put you wise to something. The Middle West circuit's worked dry. I had to borrow from the constable to get out of Emporia, and in Keokuk I was blackmailed poor by a Rube I tried the badger game on."

"That's the stuff! The only town in America where you can catch the hick off the nest with the golden eggs exposed. I got a cousin doin' well there on the old glass-ring game."

"Yes, but look at the competition!" Brian objected. "There's three bunks there to every hick. And what's your home-made mining swindle against the kind of graft they make by machinery?"

"Well, I'm gettin' old," sighed the swindler. "But a fresh train-load o' straw arrives at the New York Central every fifteen minutes. This is my last stand—maybe I won't have to keep bar in my old age."

"If you ain't skinned poor before you've been in New York a week, come around to be and I'll buy some of your goods," said Brian kindly, but with deep foreboding, for he was still mindful of O'Malley's tale of what greedy Gotham does to the naive outsider.

II.

It is the conventional thing for the newcomer in New York to pause Aladdin-like, mind whirling, eyes blinking at the magic works of these djinns who have bewitched mankind. Shall he fly first to the Metropolitan Museum, or shall it be the Metropolitan Tower. Shall he climb the Statue of Liberty or descend into the subway? But Brian Boru Blaney, his feet set on Manhattan, was tortured by no such doubts. He called a taxi at the Grand Central Station, and, after tucking his baggage and his Betsy safely inside, called commandingly to the chauffeur: "Beat it for the first shoe store on Fifth Avenue."

Betsy's head was out of the window many times. She all but plunged herself headlong several times in passing window displays of feminine attire, and as they whirled by the emporium of a famous milliner she cried, with almost a sob in her voice: "Brian, you've just got to stop here!" But her auburn-haired lord had his eyes set sternly to the fore. They drew up before a plate-glass window with masculine footwear discreetly displayed.

"Nope!" he announced to the smiling clerk, "I don't want anything similar to what I got on. Gimme something like Vince Astor kicks around in."

They sold him a pair with tapering toes, flat soles, and unostentatious eyelets. They cost him eight dollars.

"Score one!" said Brian, making a mark on his cuff as he paid the bill. He wore the shoes out of the shop. "Now that I got rid of those hick kicks, I guess we'll be safe to walk along Fifth Avenue, paying the taxes here and there."

At a famous milliner's Betsy chose a hat with very little on it, but that well disposed. The bill was sixty-five dollars.

"Score two!" announced Brian, making another mark on his cuff.

"What on earth are you doing, Sugar?" asked his wife.

"Keepin' tab on New York. We've been here half an hour, and she's got us seventy-three bucks already."

They took a room at the St. Sidon Hotel, a fabulous pile overlooking Broadway's busiest corner.

"I'm tired already," said Betsy, throwing herself on a gilded chaise-lounge.

"When I look at a dump like this," remarked the Little Booster, "I feel like the King o' Persia—afraid to sit down for fear some of the gold leaf'll stick to my pants." He walked over to the window and looked down on the restless human stream flowing below. "I bet N' York's got more ticket speculators than San Bruno's got population. Look! there's a fire-engine tryin' to beat a rubberneck wagon, and a lame horse has just sat down in front of a milk wagon and tied up all the rapid transit from here to the Bronx. Careless Dobbin!"

After lunch, Brian complained of his new shoes pinching; but he bravely kept his footing within their resisting soles, and plunged still further into the gulf of conventionality by changing to a suit of quiet gray and an inoffensive necktie.

"Going far?" inquired Betsy, sleepily from her couch.

"To 13½ Washington Square," he said. "I'm going to present O'Malley's letter to Dyckman Wynkoop to see if he's cheese or human. Want to come along?"

"No, you little old big foolish; I'm not being introduced. I suppose we're going somewhere tonight——"

"Bet your fairy goloshes we're goin' somewhere. As soon as the Scotch whisky ads begin to light up along the Great Tight Way, we'll beat it for one o' those tay dansong restaurants where they teach the Harry Thaw glide free with every thousand dollars' worth of champagne. Tonight's the big, wide evening!"

Brian fixed his hat at a dangerous angle in the midst of a dance figure which ended in an ardent embrace of his girlish bride.

"Don't let any bunco man see you while you're in that mood," she cautioned. "Remember, you're a hick in a great city."

About 6 o'clock he came whistling back, his face afire with enthusiasm.

"Did you find him?" asked Betsy, who was waiting with the patience of an experienced wife, to be hooked up in the back.

"Who? Dyckie Chickencoop? Nope. Say, Dyckie lives in a boy's-size brick palace with a white door, and a brass knocker. When I banged the knob, out shoots a Woodrow Wilson effect in butlers. 'Not to hum,' he says. When I called him Charley, he snatched my card away from me and slammed the door so quick he most pinched off my nose."

"Sugar Boy, he probably saw you were a——"

"Hick?" Yes. But how did he know? So I hired an open taxi and sailed forth to discover N' York."

"Saw the Woolworth Building, a Jew cop arrestin' a drunken Armenian, the Brooklyn Bridge, a fight, a Wall Street panic, the Pennsylvania Station, and Willie Collier tryin' to light a cigar on a windy corner."

"Anything else?"

"I saw a hick. Right before my eyes. Y' see, I dropped my taxi at Fourteenth Street, and ducked into the subway just to get a taste of that celebrated canned air. And what d' you think I saw, the first thing? A Rube got up and gave his seat to a lady. I was sitting comfortably on somebody's mother at the time, and I wanted to lead that hick aside and say, 'Not done, old chap—not in New York;' but I let him go his suicidal why. Wallingford'll get him before morning."

Betsy stood before the mirror and pointed suggestively at the unhooked void in the back of her gown.

"Sweet Maple!" sighed the Little Booster, settling down to a desperate struggle with the intricacies thereof, the dressmaker that built this dream must 'a' had an awful lot o' time!" The days of his bondage had begun.

"Don't make any quick moves," Brian cautioned his wife, "because every time you do it starts a waiter this way, and that costs you five dollars extra."

The bill was nineteen dollars.

"Score three!" warbled Brian, keeping imaginary tab on his cuff. He led Betsy rather hastily toward the foyer. It was getting on toward 10 o'clock, and round the corner, glaring amid infernal glories of jumping gigantic electric images, stood the Cabaret de l'Obsterre, home of tangled tangoes where Baal feeds fat, where the heathen rage, and where the Turk trotteth till dawn.

Most of the tables were already taken when they entered. Young Mrs. Blaney was not too young to note the two types of women: Those who had come and those who had been brought—the former characterized by elaborate complexions inside infantile hats; their lips were bold, their eyes were cold.

"Let's twirl!" came Brian's enthusiastic voice in Betsy's ear, for the band had now struck up "We'll row, row, row," and many couples took the floor, every Jack to his Jill, every Bacchus to his Bacchante. By way of divertissement, a Princeton gladiator had arisen from a tableful of college boys, and was inviting the head waiter to put him out.

"Let's go!" pleaded Betsy, seizing Brian's arm.

"Stick around, kid," Brian urged. "We needn't be afraid of this dansong stuff. All New York's doin' it."

"I'll bet half the men here are traveling salesmen from Duluth. Don't be a hick!" This was Betsy's quelling word.

"Speaking of hicks," whispered her husband, nudging her sharply, "look what's just come in!"

"Who is he?"

"The Rube I saw give his seat to a lady in the subway. He's hopeless!" For, even at the word, the newcomer—who wore buttoned tan shoes—was ordering a Manhattan cocktail.

"He must be the King of the Hickories," murmured Brian, becoming more and more concerned. "Ain't it pitiful!" The object of Brian's commiseration called to him the head waiter, and, in the presence of the whole room, handed him a five dollar bill. Then he lit a cigar, and kept the band on.

"He's got every one of O'Malley's 'How to Tell a Hick' marks except he don't shave his neck. Probably he's waitin' for the barber shop to open in the morning."

"He's rather nice-looking," said Betsy, "and he wears a good suit of clothes."

"Whiskers! There ought to be a Society for the Protection of Him. I've a good mind to give that lone yokel a tip before he falls in the hands of——"

Down the aisle came a florid, familiar face. The head waiter pulled out a chair next the unprotected stray. And the person who occupied the seat, presenting a cordial palm to the helpless hick, was none other than G. Hunter McCosh, the superannuated bunco man of the D. & R. G.

McCosh's broad back was toward Brian, therefore he could not see his neighbors, although close enough to be easily overheard. Brian quickly forgot the charms of tango in the study of bunco as the elderly rascal laid his fat palm caressingly over the hand of the younger man, who was neat and rather small, with oyster-colored eyes and a sallow mustache.

"No, my boy; you can't afford to miss this," began McCosh, in the tone of thick gravy. "Take an old man's advice and——" The rest was lost in the musical racket.

"Opportunity knocks but once at the door . . . good as smelted gold . . . as proved by our specimens"—these scraps in McCosh's soothing tone.

"If we could only find a place to talk more quietly——"

"It is kinda noisy here," McCosh admitted. "Supposing you and me go over to Gothamia grill . . . the details of this splendid proposition."

"Come on!" breathed Brian in Betsy's ear.

"Where?"

"To the Gothamia grill!"

It was easy to see why the more or less skilful Mr. McCosh had chosen the Gothamia grill. A lunchroom in one of the largest hotels, it opens, flowerlike, at the hour of noon, and closes again at sunset, when the interest is diverted to the Fragonard dining room upstairs or the Bohemian music-hall in the basement.

"A gunman's delight!" exclaimed Brian. "If I stabbed a man here and dragged him into the elevator, how would Hearst ever catch me? . . . Waiter!" A blue Alsatian mountaineer approached glibly. "Bring a pitcher of blond beer and a lemonade."

The waiter retreated, and the door was darkened by the shadow of a pompous person leading a slender youth of hesitating mein.

"Pretty work!" murmured Brian. They sat at a table far out of ear-shot but well within view.

"O Maud, what a sucker!" sniffed Brian. "He wants to bite so bad, he's helping put the bait on the hook."

The two figures at the distant table leaned back. Something was settled. The elder man brought forth a packet of papers folded lengthwise.

"McCosh was right," said Brian. "You can make the man from Keokuk do stunts in N' York he's never dreamt of in his home town."

"Maybe it's not so bad as you think," suggested Brian.

"Didn't you see the orange-colored engravings in the paper? That's Goodfellow and Surprise bunk he's selling the hick—and look! Rube's pullin' his check-book!"

Sure enough, the lamb was already reaching for McCosh's fountain-pen. There was a moment of intense scribbling, during which McCosh bit a black cigar and forgot to light it. Finally a pink leaf from the check-book guttered in his palm, and he handled it like a rare orchid. An instant later McCosh was seen to rise rather feverishly, button his coat over the new-made check, extend a loving hand to his victim, and stride forth into the unknown. Brian jumped from his chair.

"You're not going to——"

"You bet I am! As a stranger in town, I ain't a-goin' to sit here and see my helpless brother skun bright red on Broadway."

The young man sat reading an orange-printed sheet of Goodfellow and Surprise rapturously, even as the Moslem scans the Koran, when Brian accosted him.

"Excuse me!" said the Little Booster, "I don't know what part of the Woolly West you come from, but you'll take back less wool than you brought with you."

"Meaning?" inquired the youth, adjusting his eye-eglasses.

"Do you know who that bunk is you just——"

"That 'bunk,' as you roughly term him," said the young man in a modulated barytone, "is Mr. Hotchkiss, well known in Goodfellow and——"

"His name was McCosh when I met him. Now, listen to mother. There ain't any time to feed the chickens. I'm telling you. You just fallen for a man who's a professional walnut-pusher, a dot-and-carry card-handler, a life member of the Gold Brick Layers' Union—in plain Califorts, a bunko man. Because you left your brains the other side of the Ohio River, I'll wise you. You've been bilked, trimmed."

"But he came to New York with the highest of references."

"Splash! I've a good mind to touch you for a thousand myself. How much was in that check you just signed?"

"Forty-five hundred and fifty.

"Get your bank the first thing in the morning and stop it."

"Lord!" groaned the callow one. "It's on the Night and Day Bank!"

"Telephone—hot foot, kid!"

The sedate grill-room was enlivened by the sight of a red-headed enthusiast dragging a dazzled youth across two chairs toward the telephone-booth. A few minutes later Betsy, to her relief, beheld her husband returning calmly with the new-found hick.

"Now, Marcus," Brian was saying, "we've got to kite it over to the Night and Day and identify you. Friend wife and I'll tax along to see that the rest of your wad don't jump out of the window."

The hick had a taxi—waiting by the hour apparently — outside. As they bumped over New York's asphalt, which, like her sky-line, is picturesque but uneven, Betsy tried to soothe the stranger with commonplaces.

"Doesn't it seem grand in New York after the country?" she asked.

"It does," said the hick folornly.

When he emerged from the sleepless portals of the Night and Day, there were tears in his pale orbs, suggestive of seafood.

"They've fixed it—but it hurts me to think I've been betrayed by a friend," he sobbed.

"That's what they all say," chirped Brian, brightly. "Now, Mrs. Bride and I'll escort you past the bogies to your hotel.

"Now look you, son," Brian went on, for he must have his lecture. He put his hand patronizingly now on the hick's knee. "I just got to hand it out. Take it or leave it. When in Rome you gotta do as the Romeos do. Don't talk to large men with fancy vests. Maybe you'll thank me for this when you get back to the home town."

"It's not my fault. It's the way the old man raises me," the callow one moaned. "Never letting me go into business, like other fellows."

"Say!" Brian had an inspiration. "If you ever want a wise guy to take you around N' York, ring me up. I'm at the St. Sidon. Stick around, kid, and I'll show you all the new stuff."

"Thanks, awfully," said the hick.

The taxi stopped before a brick house with a white door.

"You've pulled me out of an awful hole, old man," he continued, as he stepped out. "I'd like to see more of you. Here's my card."

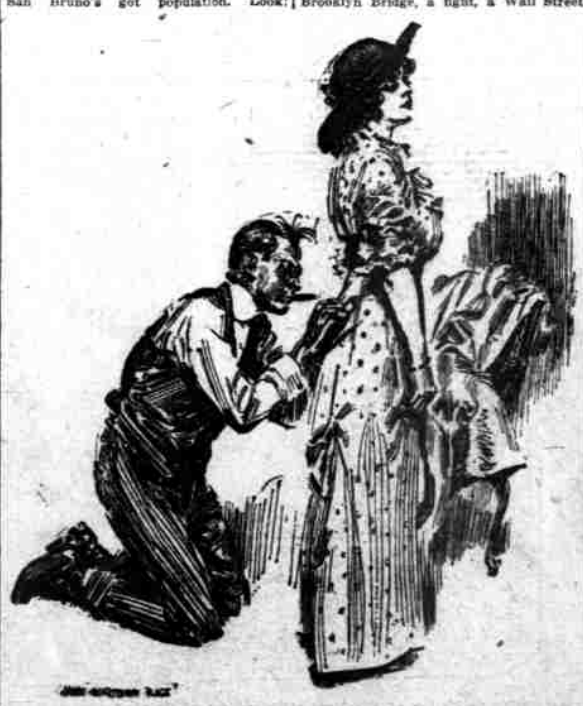
The hick's face stared into the taxi door, pale and anxious. Brian, as he accepted the card, felt a thrill of remorse. Perhaps he had been a bit rough in this language to this outsider, who, after all, would learn his New York in time. Under the flickering corner light Brian held the card, spelling each letter carefully. Already the hick was disappearing up the front steps.

"Say!" said Brian, calling after him, and again looking at the name on the card, "I got a letter of introduction to you."

And as the hick returned, the Little Booster brought forth O'Malley's envelope addressed to Mr. Dyckman Wynkoop, 13½ Washington Square.

"I thought I might as well hand it to you now, seein' I'm around your way."

"McCosh's broad back was toward Brian, therefore he could not see his neighbors."



"The days of his bondage had begun."